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On Writing

January 2008

I AM DEEPLY HONORED that City Lights, and its editor, Greg Ruggiero, would decide to publish these fifty years of my writings. Since I first hitchhiked west and visited the City Lights bookstore in 1960, I have revered it as a sanctuary of the word, and as a fountain of the nonconformity that not only broke and survived the icy 1950s, but announced the coming of the 1960s. I am thankful to Greg for his dedication and incisive mind, to Eliot Katz for his loyalty to the cultural legacy of the 1960s, and to Carolyn Stanley for her perseverance in handling permissions.

I was a high school sophomore when Allen Ginsberg first read "Howl," a graduating senior when *On the Road* was published in 1957. My hometown was Royal Oak, Michigan, one of the nation's early suburbs. In 1954, unknown to me, Royal Oak's business elite promoted our town as "virtually 100 percent white."[1] This was a rare public admission in those silent times. The quote never came to my attention until the author David Freund unearthed and published it in 2006. It took a writer to fill in this gap in my identity. I was blind to the reality in which I lived. During my high school years I thought that the civil rights struggle was only in Montgomery, Alabama, and Little Rock, Arkansas, but not in suburban hometowns.

I realized that the cure to this blindness somehow involved the power of perception, the ability to discern "the evidence of things not seen" (the quote is both from James Baldwin and the Bible). In today's bureaucracies, it is called "thinking outside the box." The writer's task was to discover, observe and report on unnoticed events that might be important to living or even become History. I joined the staff of my high school paper as a sports writer, and advanced to editor-in-chief. When I went to university,

I was drawn into the culture of the *Michigan Daily*, a paper that we "put to bed" in the early hours of every morning. The *Daily* became an alternative university for me, one where ideas seemed to matter more than in the classroom.

"For the native, objectivity is always directed against him."[2]
—Frantz Fanon

I have always struggled with objectivity. I was deeply independent and critical, leaving me a loner as exciting events were unfolding all around me. When I interviewed Martin Luther King Jr. at the Democrats' 1960 convention, my inner contradictions were swirling. I wanted to identify with the new civil rights movement, but I felt awkward putting down my notebook and holding up a picket sign. I thought, too, reporting Dr. King's words might advance my career in journalism.

I also wrote about Kennedy's nomination with ambivalence: "He has inspired this convention with the promise of political victory, with the promise of vigorous and tenacious party leadership, with the promise of youth. He has not yet inspired everyone with his ideas and the firmness of his commitment to those ideas."[3]

I straddled too, reporting from Los Angeles on the birth of the new student movement, as if it was a thing apart from me, to be carefully examined:

"If a fear of the profound complexity of modern life forces the majority of students to withdraw into conservatism, what is it in life which magnetizes the minority of students into quite fearless rebellion?

"The student seems to have reached a point where it is so self-humiliating not to assert himself that he is impelled to cry out at any material cost so that he may somehow preserve the integrity of his personality. I do not profess to know if this is the final answer. In fact, no one seems to know at the moment. But 500 students will picket the Democratic convention today."[4]

I could not remain neutral, however. I realized that the very people and

events that I was covering were changing me. I was moving within my inner self. At the time, investigative reporting was not a recognized field of journalism. Editorials were opinion pieces written by the editors. News, even news analysis, was sanitized of opinion. My models were Tom Paine's revolutionary pamphlets and Albert Camus' passionate essays on resistance. I evolved into an impassioned college editor who exposed that the dean of women was snooping on co-eds, and who wrote some of the first articles covering the emergence of the new student movement which drew considerable concern from university administrators and left me feeling unsure of my own journalistic boundaries. I took the further activist step of promoting a student political party, called Voice, that eventually became a chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). I gradually chose activism over a journalistic career, but never ceased to write, becoming at first a pamphleteer drafting broadsides from the South. In late 1961 I was asked by the SDS to write the founding manifesto, the *Port Huron Statement* (*PHS*), which I began scribbling furiously from a jail cell in Albany, Georgia. The *PHS* recognized the need for writers and intellectuals in building a New Left movement: "In a time of supposed prosperity, moral complacency, and political manipulation, a new left cannot rely on only aching stomachs to be the engine force of social reform. The case for social change, for alternatives that will involve uncomfortable personal efforts, must be argued as never before."

From that point forward, I thought of myself primarily as a community organizer and activist, my writing linked to causes. But the deeper truth was this: I took activist leadership where it seemed necessary, but I could never, ever stop digging for the truth and writing it down.

These writings collected here are my own witness to fifty years of American history (unbelievably, at 67 years old, I have lived one-fourth of our country's history!). There is an arc, a story line of sorts, discernible in the selections chosen for this book:

➤ In my period of youthful radical idealism (1960–68), the writings are like wake-up calls, attempting to inspire the readers to action on behalf of southern blacks, student empowerment, and above all to stop the Vietnam

War. In mainstream terms, the peak moment of "success" came on November 13, 1967 when the *New York Times* published an article about me as an "improbable radical" who symbolized the insurgency of the New Left. Suddenly there was widespread interest in what I was writing. The *New York Review of Books* and Random House solicited me for articles and books. Robert Silvers of the *New York Review* was either gutsy or giddy enough to publish on the journal's cover a drawing of a Molotov cocktail along with my 90,000-word story about the Newark riot. Random House rushed to publish the text as *Rebellion in Newark*. But as my writings seemed to defend campus takeovers and ghetto riots, my star plummeted among the "the New York intellectuals" and other cultural-literary circles in general. Irving Howe detected a Stalinist authoritarian bent. Hannah Arendt weighed in against the intruders on university property. The *Review* retreated from its radical flirtations, never asked me to write again, and later condemned my book *Irish on the Inside* for being soft on violence. All the distinctions between advocating for, defending, and understanding violence vanished as the openings of the 1960s closed and the neoconservative grip tightened.

Perhaps more ominous were the Pentagon-sponsored counterinsurgency manuals identifying me as "one of the masters of terrorist planning," divulged by Congressman Joseph Kennedy years later. At first I thought this was a smear or a mistake, but reading further I realized that it seemed forbidden, unacceptable, for an American writer to even suggest a logic of violence. The training manual points out that "many terrorists are very well trained in subversion of the democratic process and use the system to advance their causes." At the time the manual was circulating, I was an assemblyman working in Los Angeles with refugees from the civil war and death squads that the U.S. government fostered in El Salvador. The counterinsurgency experts apparently saw me as well trained in subversion of the democratic process because of my being elected by the voters. (See Lisa Haugaard, "Latin American Working Group," *In These Times*, October 14, 1996.)

As a politician and an author, the accusation of being "soft on violence" has haunted me as for decades. If, as Clausewitz wrote, violence is politics by other means, then I believe we must use the nonviolence of the word

to explore openings which make political change an alternative to violence. Where peaceful reform is impossible, as John Kennedy said, violent rebellion becomes inevitable.

➤ In my two-decade period of electoral politics (1976–2000), the writings are more purposeful and programmatic, though eclectic, including ruminations on building a progressive political movement and commentaries on concrete issues like educational reform, rebuilding cities, or phasing out cancer-causing chemicals. There came another peaking of legitimacy in the 1980s when I was elected to office and was associated with the likes of Jerry Brown, Gary Hart, and Michael Dukakis. The *Los Angeles Times* published nearly any column I sent them as long as I held an electoral mandate, an era of access which closed when I left office in 2000 and ownership of the paper changed hands. During this period my writings were published in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Boston Globe*.

➤ In my current reflective period (circa 1998–present), the writings turn back to social movements and larger concerns of my youth, beginning with Seattle in 1999, the growing anti-globalization movement of young people in the nineties, the moral challenge of the environmental crisis, many pieces on stirrings in Central and Latin America, and finally the war in Iraq. During this period I became a member of the *Nation's* editorial board, learned to blog for the *Huffington Post* Web site and I wrote five books for independent publishers. Also during this period, I wrote many op-eds in opposition to the Iraq war which the *New York Times* rejected on the grounds that I wasn't "qualified," though they did seek my reflections on the street protests outside the 2004 Republican national convention.

I learned from these experiences that a writer's success, at least in quantifiable terms, depends on the mood swings of public opinion as gauged by the media and publishing gatekeepers who determine the boundaries of "legitimate" editorial opinion. What is legitimate is too often politically determined. It is commonplace that propagandistic, even mindless, articles by public officials are published—articles which are written by their

staffs. The spectrum of what is considered legitimate editorial opinion has drifted far to the right since the Reagan and Bush eras, even when public opinion moves to the left. The resulting gap is being increasingly filled by the blogosphere.

City Lights has been a steady exception to this rule. And who knows, a new generation of young people may get turned on to the searching, openness, struggle and vibrant counterculture which City Lights brought to society's attention fifty years ago. The year 2008 will mark the fortieth anniversary of the Chicago conspiracy trial, and two films on the subject are already planned for release. In 2010 we will begin the fiftieth anniversary of everything that happened in the decade of the 1960s. As a cultural war over the control of memory, it will be a critical period for reflection and debate as the last survivors of the 1960s fade away.

The arc I notice in these fifty years of writings is this: in this third and current phase I return to my early roots as an awakened eyewitness to new social movements, but now with the experience of having worked within the system I originally desired to change. Where I began in Mississippi, I was now writing about Chiapas and Bolivia. Where I began as a chronicler of the American student movement, I was now writing about the globalized protests of a new generation. Where I began writing as a Northern student about the American South, I now felt myself drawn into the rising of the global South. Where I once wrote endlessly about the Vietnamese, I was now witnessing the suffering and struggles of Iraq. It seems like a circle, ever enlarging, but returning always to its own beginnings. Los Angeles, where I have lived for three decades, seemed a logical place from which to see the global refracted in virtually everything local and vice versa, from the immigration of Central American war refugees and Mexican campesinos, to the globalization of capital and the resistance to its reach, to the "Latino-ization" of the United States and its backlash, to the wars on drugs and gangs and the growth of the prison-industrial complex, to the rise of mega-cities with their sweltering ghettos and barrios alongside the lifestyles of the rich and famous made possible by the lethal draining of distant environmental resources. In Los Angeles one could stare with experienced eyes at the miles of electrical lights and, with a

proper understanding, really grasp the polluting of the Grand Canyon, the draining of great rivers and the cutting of great ancient forests that made all this imperial affluence possible.

As I fell away from leadership roles in politics and organizations, I began to feel a renewed purpose as an observer, interviewer, writer and teacher. Sociologists call the technique "participant observation," but I prefer the notion of being an engaged and reflective human being and writer, a participatory witness. The divisions between the objective and subjective have faded. As the Jesuits insist, contemplation in action is the ideal. To understand events, one must participate in them while critically observing others and oneself at the same time. And so, like learning and reporting what I learned in Georgia and Mississippi in 1961, now I felt an urgency to experience Seattle or the other anti-globalization uprisings first hand, not as a leader but as a writer surprised at the unexpected birth of a new activism. Action, involvement, participation all create a kind of evidence that cannot be seen before it occurs. The subjective changes the objective. That seminal observer, writer and rebel, Henry David Thoreau, said this long ago with great brevity: "Action from principle—the perception and the performance of right—changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary and does not consist wholly with any thing which was."[5]

I also notice the passage of time, the stages of life, in these fifty years of writings. In the beginning, there is more vision and impatience, even utopianism, the great qualities of the young and inexperienced. In the middle period, there is more responsibility, as everything is written by one holding a gavel of office, writing for achievable results. In the later period, the writings contain qualities of both, the idealism of new beginnings but also an unavoidable filter of experiences, and the beginning of another path of inquiry, the path toward reflection on larger meanings. There is a sense now that I am witnessing new and original stages in a process of change and struggle 500 years old, one which began with conquest, crusades, imperialism, the Inquisition, slavery, and the rise of European capitalism. I know I will not live to see it end, and that is a feeling radically different than the dreams of my youth. Already many brilliant young writers, Naomi Klein, Susan Faludi, Arundhati Roy and Jeremy Scahill among

them, are chronicling the new experience and vision of their own generation. I learn from such young engaged writers. I know where I fit. I know the meaning of being asked to publish fifty years of writing. I will continue to write as long as curiosity keeps me alive, as notes from a past to a future I welcome. Nearly fifty years ago, James Baldwin looked ahead to an unknown time. I have tried to live by the words he wrote:

> One writes out of one thing only—one's own experience . . . The difficulty, then, for me . . . was the fact that I was, in effect, prohibited from examining my own experience too closely by the tremendous demands and the very real dangers of my social situation . . . the most crucial time in my own development came when I was forced to recognize that I was a kind of bastard of the West.[6]

Baldwin realized that he was both an African and an American who couldn't return to his past. He would "have to appropriate these white centuries" and refuse to let the white world "have a murderous power over me," or he could not write authentically at all. In a similar way, I have found it necessary to embrace my alienation as the only way to discover radical traditions usually hidden from white Americans. Otherwise, I would have adjusted to the system's relentless demands long ago, and as a writer, would be a stranger to my own estrangement. I agree with Baldwin's conclusion, that "I consider that I have many responsibilities, but none greater than this: '*to last*,' as Hemingway says, '*and get my work done*.'"[7]

NOTES

1. David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property, State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America*, University of Chicago, 2006, p. 243.
2. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, 1963, p. 77 in "Concerning Violence."
3. *Michigan Daily*, July 15, 1960.
4. *Michigan Daily*, July 9, 1960.
5. Henry David Thoreau, *On Civil Disobedience*, Dover, 1993, p. 7.
6. Baldwin, "Autobiographical Notes," in *Baldwin, Collected Essays*, Library of America, 1998, p. 8.
7. Baldwin, p. 9. (Italics added for emphasis.)

I Building a New Left
Student Activism & Civil Rights in the Early 1960s

2

A Letter to the New (Young) Left

Originally published in the Activist,
Oberlin College, Winter 1961.

Part speech and part essay, this text was originally drafted to inspire students to join Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The title must have been taken from C. Wright Mills' influential essay in New Left Review. *The Activist was written and published by students at Oberlin College, where SDS founders Rennie Davis and Paul Potter, among others, formed one of the earliest student political parties, the precursor of an SDS chapter. This essay was a rehearsal for the drafting of the* Port Huron Statement, *which followed not long after. The tone is one of idealism, an awakening of feelings that were growing among an increasing number of activist circles on campuses around the country. There is the fearlessness of inexperience, naïveté—casting off the fetters of all previous thought and ideology to express a new mood and vision. What I find interesting, beneath the apocalyptic tone, is the persistent emphasis on testing and learning from experience itself, not ideologies or paradigms. If there is a dogmatic quality, it is an* antidogma dogma, *embracing doubt and taking action nonetheless. It is existential, spiritual and practical, seeking a unity of human identity in the face of specialization.*

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IN A PUBLICATION such as the *Activist*, written and read by a community sharing some degree of consensus regarding political values, it should not be necessary to labor in detail over the several challenges confronting the peoples of the world, and especially confronting those who claim to be of the Left. However, in part:

Internationally, the growing power and even higher expectations of the "underdeveloped" nations; the numerous issues directly relating to man's nuclear arsenal; the population problem; the influence of the Cold War

conflict on seemingly every private and public facet of the common life; the polarizing effects of the Cold War; the disintegration of easily grasped categories like "democratic," "undemocratic," "neutral"; the evolution from Stalinism to ? in Russia; the hazy and threatening future of China; the movement of power away from the West in the United Nations; the development of outer space; the coming of new communications systems. . . .

Domestically, the failures of the welfare state to deal with the hard facts of poverty in America; the drift of decision-making power away from directly representative, legislative or executive institutions into corporate and military hands neither checked by nor responsible to the courted "public"; the persistence of a racism that mocks our principles and corrupts everyday life; the encroachment upon our civil liberties seen in the intellectually masked "balancing" theory of the five Supreme Court judges as well as in the naked paranoia of our most rabid communist-phobes; the resurgence of a leaderless McCarthyism raising the flag and fist in every city across the land; the near-total absence of left position in an incredibly conservative Congress; the growing dominance of the military over formerly civilian decisions; the decline of already-meager social welfare legislation in the face of larger defense appropriations; the squandering and continuous—though somewhat checked—exploiting of our natural resources; the ugliness and ill-planned nature of our cities; the development of a technology great in its potential. . . .

Educationally, the endless repressions of free speech and thought, the stifling paternalism that infects the student's whole perception of what is real and possible and enforces a parent-child relationship until the youth is suddenly transplanted into the "the world;" the sterility of the student government and the general student community; curriculums conspicuously anachronistic in the fields of Africa, Asia and Latin America; whole new areas of study in astronomy and nuclear physics. . . .

The problems are immense. We of the Left, however, find no rest in theory, and little hope in leadership. Liberal philosophy has dealt inadequately with the twentieth century. Marx, especially Marx the humanist, has much to tell us but his conceptual tools are outmoded and his final vision implausible. The revolutionary leaders of the rising nations have been

mostly non-ideological, either forced to be so or preferring (as is the case of Guevara) to forge their political views in the heat and exigencies of revolution and the present. The American intellectuals? C. Wright Mills is appealing and dynamic in his expression of theory in the grand manner, but his pessimism yields us no formulas, no path out of the dark, and his polemicism sometimes offends the critical sense. The others? There is, I find, an inhibiting, dangerous conservative temperament behind the facade of liberal realism which is so current: Niebuhr in theology; Kornhauser, Lipset, and Bell in political science and sociology; the neo-Freudians in psychology; Hofstadter in history; Schlesinger and others of the ADA mind in the Democratic Party. Their themes purport to be different but always the same impressions emerge: Man is inherently incapable of building a good society; man's passionate causes are nothing more than dangerous psychic sprees (the issues of this period too complex and sensitive to be colored by emotionalism or moral conviction); ideals have little place in politics—we should instead design effective, responsible programs which will produce the most that is realistically possible. . . . Here and there, from the pages of *Dissent* or from isolated radicals and scholars, including Mills himself, come cries: No! You false liberals are suffering from the failure of your youthful dreams; you are eviscerating the great optimistic tradition of liberalism from the Enlightenment to the twentieth century; you are justifying disinterest in morality; you are eliminating emotion, dissent, outrage and, yes, the wellsprings of life itself.

So here we stand, limp, questioning, even scared. Our jokes run something like the cover of a recent *Liberation*: scrawled in the manner one finds covering restroom walls is the question "What can we do now?" and the huge, bold answer, "Get ready to die." It is not as though we can dismiss the world; some of us know people who already have contracted radiation disease. It is not as though we can change things; Mills was pretty accurate with his description of the monolithic power elite. It is not as though we even know what to do: we have no real visionaries for our leaders, we are not much more than literate ourselves. And it is not as though, I also fear, we even know who we are. What has made me so strangely sensitive when my brothers seem so acquiescent, what has made me call

insane what the experts call the "hard facts of power politics," what has made me feel we are on the threshold of death when others excitedly say we are on the New Frontier, and why have I turned with trembling and disgust from the Americans who do recognize peril and recoil into shelters full of the comforting gadgets the culture has produced? A more blinding situation is difficult to imagine. War, ironically, would be cathartic—though the release would be grimly brief.

In the unpredictable meantime, there are classes to attend; there are drinking bouts ahead, new friendships to be formed, loves to be experienced, parents to relate to—in short, lives to be led, no matter what the tension.

But there are more than normal lives for us to lead. The felt truths of this age call us to incorporate new dimensions into our existence. Those dimensions will constitute our response to the challenges of modernity I have briefly mentioned. Here a fundamental point should be made: "challenge" implies not only threat but opportunity. We have access to more knowledge, more potential and actual and varied power than ever before, and in the endlessness of change lies always the possibility of making new and revolutionary departures.

How, then, shall we respond? I should like here to separate style of response from program of response and claim that both our style and our program can tend toward either a defeating dogmatism or a hopeful radicalism.

By dogmatism of style is meant the style which employs stereotypes, untested concepts, easy answers, ritualistic language. Red-baiting, especially the loose use of "stalinoid" and "stalinist" is usually either paranoiac or begs the central question: it attacks motivation or psychology without substantively addressing whatever issue is really at hand, e.g. whether or not democratic social control is evolving in the Soviet Union, whether or not the Hungarian revolution was a fascist-inspired uprising. Red-baiting is no more or less dogmatic, I should add, than its current opposite, "anti-anticommunism," or "issues orientation," which tends to seal off critical, freewheeling discussion in the worthless name of "group unity." The "issues orientation" tendency says essentially: let us join together in action

wherever we agree upon the specific, isolated issue, regardless of our differences over any other issues; let us find an ideology "inductively," through group action, rather than starting with an ideology and running off into sectarian corners to spar. The danger in this course of action has not been, as fearful persons would allege, "fellow travelling" and "fronting," but, more concretely, the subversion of the possibility of lending a persuasive, insightful intellectual content to protest. "Ban the bomb" is a sentiment we all share intestinally, but it makes a movement appear mindless to the decision-makers. Furthermore, it communicates no challenge to the Rand or NATO intellects, and most important, it has no permanent educational effect upon participant, audience, and society.

The radical style, on the other hand, takes as its presupposition Dewey's claim that we are free to the extent that we know what we are about. Radicalism as a style involves penetration of a social problem to its roots, to its real causes. Radicalism presumes a willingness to continually press forward the query: Why? Radicalism finds no rest in conclusions; answers are seen as provisional, to be discarded in the face of new evidence or changed conditions. This is, in one sense, a difficult mental task and, in a more profound moral sense, it represents a serious personal decision to be introspective, to be exposed always to the stinging glare of change, to be willing always to reconstruct our social views. Who likes to understand himself, or be without his personal Bible, be it that of Marx, Freud, Darwin, or Christ? Radicalism of style asks us to go beyond the State Department lies about the U-2, or the simplistic view that Khrushchev dropped the fifty-megaton bomb for purposes of pure terror, or that democratic socialism solves all the problems of individual development. In its harshest condensation, radicalism of style demands that we oppose delusions and be free. It demands that we change our life.

All this circumlocution is not intended to suggest that simple moral statements or concerns are meaningless. On the contrary, I think most persons who lean to the left politically are moved by quite important feelings of solidarity for the impoverished, the oppressed, the debased, and all of suffering mankind; by a commitment to the general ideals of Western humanism, particularly, the freedoms of speech, thought, and association;

by a distrust of selfish, competitive individualism operating in the economic sphere (or any other); by a belief in cooperation and collective planning balanced against the necessity for individual consent; and so on. These, however enthralling, are not worthy of our allegiance as abstraction. It is their infusion into practical life which gives them true content and determines the extent to which we shall value them. The things we are for or against are quite simple at the level of abstraction; it is in the test of their practical meaning that we must make our judgment—not between good and evil, but the more difficult distinction between better or best, or the hardest choice of all, that of the necessary evil. Radicalism, it seems to me, does not exclude morality; it invites and is given spirit by the quality of *reflective commitment,* the combining of our passion and our critical talents into a provisional position. To remove an idea from the plane of abstraction, it should be added, means to inject its meaning into our total life—to send telegrams of support to Southern students means to *live one's solidarity with them,* not to belie glorious phrases by private selfishness or tolerance of local discrimination.

Radical program is simply the radical style as it attempts to change the practical life. As with style, a radical program is not one that rests before it has plumbed to the basis of the problem it confronts. We should not be satisfied with going by "back door" methods (however "realistic") to persuade President Kennedy to wire a telegram of encouragement to a jailed Martin Luther King. That is problem-mitigating, not problem-solving. That is useful, preventive, and even opinion-changing, but not radical for it in no sense identifies and deals with the underlying political-economic-historic-psychological bases of the problem.

All this is not to say we should diminish our urgency or reduce our passions—we should not. This is not to say we should go off in corners to study "both sides of the issue"—we should, but not exclusively. This is simply to say that the student movement which has rejected so many institutions and instruments of social change—the Southern courtrooms, by and large the Democratic Party, the military, often the Congress—has invented no substitute save a noble morality and in some cases a commitment to non-violence that will dissipate soon if not secured in new social

structures. An essential phase of radicalism is the decision to disengage oneself entirely from the system being confronted (segregation for example) so that the structure sustained by our former attitudes can no longer endure. Another essential, however, is that we visualize and then build structures to counter those which we oppose. This extends from the concrete formation of a national student organization to the conceptual—for the time being—formation of a different society.

Instead of this we find ourselves making the understandably frequent mistake, for example, of confusing target with goal. This is true of the campaign to abolish the House Committee on Un-American Activities. HUAC is surely no more than a target, but our passions have made its abolition, in fact, a goal. The danger here is that in our failure to formulate a comprehensive personal vision of a social goal beyond the abolition of HUAC, abolition itself may not carry with it a scourging effect on the society. The deeply rooted strands of nationalism, fascism, and racism will be newly woven in new HUAC's by our fearful public. Similarly, the lunch counter sit-in movement has been forced to develop a broader, more complex vision of the future—interrelating targets with goals—to remain successful.

Thus far we have been quick to know what we oppose: racism, militarism, nationalism, oppression of mind and spirit, unrestrained capitalism, provincialism of various kinds, and the bombs. It has been an almost instinctive opposition. We have been hurt by what exists, and we have responded in outrage and compassion. However, the times are too threatening for us to respond simply as comforters of the oppressed. Keeping sentiments as our base, we must move ahead concertedly with our goal—the changing of society, not the assuaging of its continuous ills. That means politics as well as sentimentality. That means writers and theoreticians as well as organizers and picketers. That means drawing on what remains of the adult labor, academic and political communities, not just revolting in despair against them and the world they have designed for us. Contrary to what our passions demand, our struggle will not be brief and cataclysmic—unless terminated in the roaring climax of nuclear war. Our gains will be modest, not sensational. It will be slow and exhaustingly com-

plex, lasting at the very least for our lifetimes. For many of us it will not and cannot be a college fling, a costless, painless tugging at our liberal sentimentality. It will be longer, and the cost great.

What is desperately needed, I think, is the person of vision and clarity, who sees both the model society and the pitfalls that precede its attainment, and who will not destroy his vision for short-run gains but, instead, hold it out for all to see as the furthest dream and perimeter of human possibility. I am beset by doubt at this point; so, perhaps, are we all. We doubt our ability to effect change, we doubt our ability to understand enough, we doubt the validity of time-honored liberal notions, we doubt the right and wrong of it. I do not recommend that we banish doubt and rush forth under the banal slogan "where there is a will there is a way," but I would suggest that it is possible and necessary to begin to think and act—provisionally yet strongly—in the midst of our doubts. We must begin to see doubt, not as a reason for inaction—that way leads to intellectual sterility. We must see it as a reminder that infallibility is not the property of any single man and, moreover, that compassion for enemies is not simply a heroic show, but a manifestation of our deepest moral anxiety.

3

SNCC in Action

Dignity for the Enslaved and for Us All

Fall 1961

When the student civil rights movement began, I traveled to the South to write about the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) second region-wide meeting, in October 1960. It was there I fell in love with the movement and with Sandra Cason, a poetic graduate student from Austin, Texas. I asked to be the SDS southern field secretary, married Casey and moved to Atlanta in 1961. The marriage sadly collapsed in two years, partly because I was not ready at that age (few relationships lasted through those liberating days). She remained a major figure in both SNCC and in the birth of the women's movement in 1964; today she lives with her husband and children in New Mexico.

My mission for SDS was to witness the sit-in movement and write about it for a growing audience of Northern students, which I did through the Michigan Daily, *the* Progressive *and, believe it or not,* Mademoiselle *magazine.*

In September 1961, I traveled clandestinely to rural Mississippi with my close friend Paul Potter, an SDS leader who was then vice president of the National Student Association. Paul and I rented a car in Jackson, and drove two hours to tiny McComb, where we had to transfer cars and hide on backseats before meeting with Bob Moses, Charles McDew, Bob Zellner and a few others in a basement with blankets draped across all the windows. We also met openly with the local sheriff and newspaper editor, who railed against the outside agitators suddenly assaulting their way of life. The sheriff knew who we were and whom we had visited the night before.

Later that day, Paul and I drove alongside about 100 high school students marching in protest against segregated conditions. They were singing, holding signs, acting in an orderly manner, when suddenly all hell broke loose. Our car

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

TOM HAYDEN began writing as a high school editor and has never stopped. He has written or edited fifteen books and hundreds of published op-eds and essays.

Hayden entered the University of Michigan in time to be touched by the Southern student civil rights movement, the John F. Kennedy campaign, and the Peace Corps. He was chosen editor of the *Michigan Daily*, but passed up a journalism career to work on the front lines of the civil rights movement. He was a Freedom Rider in southern Georgia in 1961, and wrote blazing dispatches for national audiences, including *Mademoiselle* magazine.

He drafted what became the *Port Huron Statement* from an Albany, Georgia, jail cell in late 1961. The document became the founding manifesto of the Students for a Democratic Society, and has been hailed as the greatest document of the New Left era.

Hayden left university life to become a community organizer in the Newark ghetto, 1964–68. When Vietnam was bombed and invaded starting in 1965, however, Hayden began opposing the war as a derailment of the fight for social justice in America. He was an early traveler to Hanoi and opponent of the war and draft.

His opposition to Vietnam led Hayden to participate in the Columbia student strike in April 1968 and the militant street protests in Chicago that same year. He was indicted with seven others by the Nixon administration, convicted in 1969, and acquitted on appeal in 1973. He was married at the time to actress Jane Fonda, with whom he has a son and stepdaughter.

After the war, Hayden entered California politics for two decades, winning seven out of eleven races, and chairing legislative policy committees on natural resources, higher education and labor. He authored over 100 measures that became law, and was described as "the conscience of the Senate" when he retired in 2000.

Hayden still writes prolifically, and has taught in recent years at Pitzer College, Occidental College, and the Harvard Institute of Politics. His most recent books are *Ending the War in Iraq* (2006), *The Port Huron Statement* (2006), *Street Wars* (2005), *The Lost Gospel of the Earth* (2005), and *The Zapatista Reader* (2003). His website is www.tomhayden.com.